



ANNA KOMNENE AND HER SOURCES FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS IN THE ALEXIAD

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ABSTRACT

With the intensive focus on military affairs in the *Alexiad* provoking contentious theories and much debate, this article investigates more closely the sources of information available to Anna Komnene for her coverage of war during the reign of Alexios Komnenos. Though Anna discloses more about her sources than most Byzantine historians, it is argued that some of these claims, particularly those regarding her own capacity to witness events and converse with veteran participants, are somewhat disingenuous, intended to illustrate her adherence to traditional modes of inquiry and thus gain credence for her history. Without discounting the contribution of oral traditions of storytelling to the *Alexiad*, the study favours the growing consensus that Anna was more reliant on written material, especially campaign dispatches and military memoirs.

Metadata: Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, Alexios I Komnenos, Nikephoros Bryennios, Military Dispatches, Military Memoirs, Eyewitness Accounts, Byzantine Warfare.

RÉSUMÉ

L'importance accordée par l'*Alexiade* aux questions militaires a suscité des théories controversées et nombre de débats. Cet article examine de plus près les sources dont disposait Anna Comnène pour son récit de la guerre sous le règne d'Alexis Comnène. Bien que Anna nous renseigne davantage sur ses sources que la plupart des historiens byzantins, on a néanmoins postulé que certaines de ses démarches, en particulier celle concernant sa capacité à rendre compte des événements et de faire parler les vétérans, peuvent s'avérer fourbes, vouées à montrer son adhésion aux modes traditionnels d'enquête et donc à donner plus de crédibilité à son histoire. Sans négliger l'apport

fondamental des témoignages oraux dans la rédaction de l'*Alexiade*, la présente étude privilégie l'opinion majoritaire qui pense qu'Anna s'est davantage fondée sur des documents écrits, en particulier les dépêches et les écrits des militaires.

Metadata: Anne Comnène, *Alexiade*, Alexis I Comnène, Nicéphore Bryennios, dépêches et mémoires militaires, témoignages oculaires, guerre byzantine

RESUMEN

Partiendo del hecho de que la extrema importancia que la *Alexíada* da a las cuestiones militares está provocando teorías polémicas y mucho debate, este artículo investiga con mayor detalle las fuentes de información de que disponía Ana Comnena para cubrir la guerra durante el reinado de Alejo Comneno. A pesar de que Ana revela sus fuentes más que la mayoría de los historiadores bizantinos, argumentamos que algunas de sus pretensiones de haber podido ser testigo de los sucesos y conversado con los participantes en ellos, son de algún modo insinceras y tienen como objetivo ilustrar su adhesión a modos tradicionales de investigación y ganar así credibilidad para su historia. Sin descartar la contribución de las tradiciones narrativas orales para la *Alexíada*, este estudio favorece el consenso creciente de que Ana se apoyaba más en material escrito, especialmente despachos de campaña y memorándums militares.

Metadata: Ana Comnena, *Alexíada*, Alejo I Comneno, Nicéforo Brieno, despachos militares, memorándums militares, narraciones de testigos oculares, guerra bizantina

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Few contributions to Byzantine studies have proved quite as provocative as James Howard-Johnston's article questioning Anna Komnene's authorship of the *Alexiad*, essentially reducing her task to editing and refining a collection of notes and drafts compiled by her husband, Nikephoros Bryennios. In Howard-Johnston's view, the detailed and conversant campaign narratives of the *Alexiad* can only have been constructed by a 'latterday Procopius' or retired soldier, rather than a Constantinople-bound princess.¹ Ruth Macrides, one of many scholars to take issue with this argument, makes the point that Anna's focus on military affairs merely placed her in the established tradition of classicizing historians, a number of whom had no real experience of war and yet populated their works with little else.² Others have challenged Howard-Johnston's hypothesis by drawing attention to stylistic and programmatic differences between Anna's history and that of her husband, attributing any similarities to an inevitable familiarity with Bryennios' *Hyle Historias*.³ Despite Howard-Johnston's best efforts therefore, it would appear that very few subscribe to the notion that the *Alexiad* is anything other than the work of Anna Komnene.

¹ J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene and the *Alexiad*", in M. Mullett – D. Smythe (eds.), *Alexios I Komnenos: Papers of the Second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14-16 April 1989* (Byzantine Texts and Translations 4), Belfast, Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996, 260-302.

² R. Macrides, "The Pen and the Sword: Who Wrote the *Alexiad*?", in T. Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000, 63-82, esp. 66-67.

³ See below, 177-179.

Anna Komnene's authorship of the *Alexiad* has then been persuasively reaffirmed, but many questions remain over her sources, an issue arguably at the heart of Howard-Johnston's misgivings over the military focus of the text and yet largely overlooked in subsequent rebuttals. The oversight is somewhat unexpected, given that the subject of Anna's sources has long interested readers of the *Alexiad*. Observations on the provenance of certain episodes in the text put forward over a century ago continue to engage current historians. Peter Frankopan, in respect to whether Anna's silences on particular matters indicate shortcomings in her material or intentional omission, considers the identification of Anna's sources to have 'a critical bearing on the evaluation of the whole *Alexiad*'.⁴ But before we can speculate at length on the precise sources behind individual events in the text, it is necessary first to clarify what Anna herself discloses about her material and informants for a work predominantly concerned with war. This article examines Anna's citations and her professed modes of acquiring information about military and political affairs, challenging previous misconceptions about Anna's sources and methods, while offering fresh analysis of the purpose and substance of Anna's extraordinary digression on her material. We observe that only by unravelling the layers of rhetoric may we attempt to determine the sources employed in the creation of the *Alexiad*.

Following the classical historiographical tradition, transparency with regard to sources employed was not a trait frequently exhibited by Byzantine historians, though Anna, rather fittingly, represents something of an exception in this respect.⁵ In book XIV of the *Alexiad* we find Anna's 'method chapter', in which she offers insight into her material rarely seen in Byzan-

⁴ P. Frankopan, "Introduction", in *Anna Komnene: The Alexiad*, London, Penguin Classics, 2009, xix.

⁵ See P. Magdalino, "Byzantine Historical Writing, 900-1400", in S. Foot – C.F. Robinson (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 2, 400-1400, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 231-232.

tine historiography. Here Anna divulges much about her sources, though previous readings of the section have caused some confusion over the exact nature of the information available to her and her means of acquiring it. A minor case in point is Anna's revelation that some of her material was 'gathered in various ways from the emperor's comrades-in-arms, who transmitted to us information about the course of the wars *διὰ τινων πορθμέων*' (emphasis added).⁶ While Sewter and Frankopan translate *διὰ τινων πορθμέων* as 'beyond the straits', indicating only the physical distance of the campaigns, the German translation of Reinsch renders the phrase as 'auch auf verschiedene Weise', while Macrides similarly opts for 'through certain carriers', both suggesting the physical transmission of information instead.⁷ While I favour the interpretations of Reinsch and Macrides, in this particular instance the difference is not hugely consequential, for there is a consensus that Anna is referring here to written material coming into her possession. Howard-Johnston considered that Anna's use of 'ποικίλως' and 'διὰ τινων πορθμέων' could be discreet references to the purported dossier of material compiled by her husband, Nikephoros Bryennios.⁸ Kambylis thought the aforementioned passage to refer to couriers bearing dispatches to Constantinople from imperial officers in the field, which seems a reasonable supposition given the various interpretations of Anna's words.⁹ Frankopan writes of Anna drawing

⁶ τὰ δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ξυστρατευσαμένων τῷ αὐτοκράτορι, ποικίλως περὶ τούτων μανθάνουσα καὶ διὰ τινων πορθμέων εἰς ἡμᾶς διαβιβαζόντων τὰ τοῖς πολέμοις συμβεβηκότα (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.5.43-45; trans. 421, with amendments).

⁷ Anna Komnene, trans. Reinsch, 502; and R. Macrides, "The Pen and the Sword" (cit. n. 2), 70.

⁸ J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene" (cit. n. 1), 280 n. 47.

⁹ A. Kambylis, "Zum 'Programm' der byzantinischen Historiker in Anna Komnene", in K.I. Vourveres – A.D. Skiadas (eds.), *Dorema: Hans Diller zum 70. Geburtstag: Dauer und Überleben des antiken Geistes*, Athina, Griechische Humanistische Gesellschaft, 1975, 127-146, esp. 143.

upon ‘campaign records’ for coverage of Alexios’ wars with the Normans.¹⁰ In a subsequent section of her method chapter Anna elaborates upon this written material while divulging further sources of information:¹¹

‘My material [...] has been gathered from insignificant writings, absolutely devoid of literary pretension, and from old soldiers who were serving in the army when my father seized the Roman sceptre, men who fell on hard times and exchanged the turmoil of the outer world for the peaceful life of monks. The writings that came into my possession were written in simple language without embellishment; they adhered closely to the truth, were distinguished by no elegance whatsoever and were composed in a manner lacking style and free from rhetorical flourish. The accounts given by the old veterans were, in language and thought, similar to the writings, and I based the truth of my history on them, checking and comparing what I had written against what they had said, and what they told me with what I had often heard, from my father in particular and from my uncles both on my father’s and on my mother’s side.’

The ‘writings’ (ξυγγραμμάτων), while similar to the accounts of retired veterans, clearly represent a distinct body of material. Anna may again be referring to the field dispatches alluded to in the preceding section, or perhaps something different, like memoirs.¹² The case for memoirs and biographical

¹⁰ P. Frankopan, “The Fall of Nicaea and the Towns of Western Asia Minor to the Turks in the Later Eleventh Century: The Curious Case of Nikephoros Melissenos”, *Byz* 76 (2006) 153-184, esp. 166-167.

¹¹ ἃ δὲ συνειλόχουν τῆς ἱστορίας [...] ἀπὸ τινων συνελεξάμην ξυγγραμμάτων ἀχρείων καὶ ἀσπουδῶν παντάπασιν καὶ γερόντων ἀνθρώπων στρατευσαμένων κατ’ ἐκεῖνο καιροῦ, καθ’ ὃν οὐμὸς πατὴρ τῶν σκήπτρων Ῥωμαίων ἐπέληπτο, χρησαμένων δὲ συμφοραῖς καὶ μετασχηματισθέντων ἀπὸ τῆς κοσμικῆς τύρβης εἰς τὴν τῶν μοναχῶν γαληνιαίαν κατάστασιν. τὰ γὰρ εἰς χεῖρας ἐμὰς ἐμπεσόντα συγγράμματα ἀπλᾶ μὲν ἦσαν τὴν φράσιν καὶ ἀπερίεργα καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐχόμενα καὶ οὐδέν τι κομψὸν ἐπιδεδειγμένα οὐδὲ ῥητορικὸν ὄγκον ἐπισυρόμενα, τὰ δὲ παρὰ τῶν γεραιτέρων ἐκδιηγούμενα τῆς αὐτῆς ἦσαν καὶ λέξεως καὶ διανοίας τῶν συγγραμμάτων ἐχόμενα· καὶ ἐτεκμηράμην ἐξ αὐτῶν τὴν τῆς ἱστορίας ἀλήθειαν, συμβάλλουσα καὶ παρεξετάζουσα τὰ παρ’ ἐμαυτῆς ἱστορούμενα πρὸς τὰ παρ’ ἐκείνων λεγόμενα καὶ τὰ παρ’ ἐκείνων πρὸς τὰ παρ’ ἐμαυτῆς, ἅπερ αὐτὴ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὸ τοῦμοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν πρὸς πατρός καὶ μητρὸς ἐμοὶ θείων ἡκηκόειν πολλάκις (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.7.64-78; trans. 422, with amendments).

¹² P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy of the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-c.1100)*, PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1998, 13 n. 31.

literature shall be explored later, but the notion that Anna employed bulletins and post-action reports is supported by a reference to this sort of material within close proximity to this section. Anna's digression on her sources interrupts discussion of the exploits of Eustathios Kamytzes, a courageous soldier charged by Alexios to deliver a bulletin to the people of Constantinople. While it is not stated that Kamytzes read from a written document, Anna notes that Kamytzes 'gave an account of what had happened, just as we have described it', indicating that she may have consulted a record of his speech for her account of Alexios and Kamytzes' actions against the Turks.¹³ With subsequent historians of the Komnenian rulers thought to have made extensive use of official campaign bulletins and reports, it is probable that Anna, seemingly so well-informed on military actions on the evidence of her richly detailed narrative, acted similarly.¹⁴

Anna's reference to the accounts of old veterans who entered the monastic sphere requires clarification. Kambylis proposes that Leib's French translation of the *Alexiad* – and by extension the English translation of Sewter and Frankopan – is incorrect to link 'ἀχρείων καὶ ἀσπουδῶν παντάπασι'

¹³ ὁ μὲν γὰρ διηγήσατο τὰ συμπεπτωκότα, καθάπερ εἶπομεν (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.8.81-82; trans. 422). Anna's account of the enterprise is found at XIV.5-6. She also mentions the *megas doux* John Doukas, Alexios' brother-in-law, sending a 'full written report' to the emperor following his reconquest of Crete and Cyprus – τῷ αὐτοκράτορι τὰ συμπεσόντα ἅπαντα διὰ γραμμάτων δηλώσαντες (Anna Komnene, IX.2.3.79-80). However, there is nothing to suggest a link between this document and Anna's account of the same events.

¹⁴ For the persuasive argument that John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates derived information from official bulletins and reports, see P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 442-453; and M. Jeffreys, "Versified Press-Releases on the Role of the Komnenian Emperor: The Public Poems of Manganeios Prodromos", in G. Nathan – L. Garland (eds.), *Basileia: Essays on Imperium and Culture in Honour of E. M. and M. J. Jeffreys* (Byzantina Australiensia 17), Brisbane, Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2011, 27-38. For military dispatches and victory bulletins in Byzantium, see most recently K. Sinclair, *War Writing in Middle Byzantine Historiography. Sources, Influences and Trends*, PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2013, 150-266.

with ‘ξυγγραμμάτων’. Kambylis instead connects the adjectives to the veterans, so that we are to understand them as ‘insignificant and completely uneducated’.¹⁵ While this reading might be more accurate, it is perhaps also problematic: a cursory reading of the *Alexiad* shows that the individuals who provided Anna with information must have been relatives of her father and his leading generals – hardly ‘insignificant’ therefore, and very likely to have been literate.¹⁶

That Anna draws attention to the plain nature of her written material, and may also claim low status for her informants, is important. If the ξυγγραμμάτων she mentions do indeed include military dispatches and memoirs, then it might be expected that such items were written in a straightforward style.¹⁷ Antiquity recognized that soldiers, chiefly concerned with practicality, typically wrote in a manner fit for purpose, giving little thought to stylistic flourish, and it may be that Byzantine military men approached writing about their actions similarly.¹⁸ In any case, Anna’s insistence that her sources

¹⁵ A. Kambylis, “Zum ‘Programm’” (cit. n. 9), 144 n. 5.

¹⁶ For the literary interests of the Middle Byzantine military aristocracy, see R. Browning, “Literacy in the Byzantine World”, *BMGS* 4 (1978) 39-54, esp. 41-44; and M. Mullett, “Writing in Early Medieval Byzantium”, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 156-185, esp. 162-163.

¹⁷ Based on a lengthy and unique example preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale*, Howard-Johnston anticipated all dispatches to possess standard traits of document-based information – lucid, concise exposition and plain, emotionless language. See J. Howard-Johnston, “The Official History of Heraclius’ Persian Campaigns”, in E. Dabrowa (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium in Kraków, 1992*, Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1994, 57-87, esp. 69-70.

¹⁸ In his guide to writing history, Lucian notes that one man ‘compiled a bare record of events and set it down on paper, completely prosaic and ordinary, such as a soldier [...] following the army might have put together as a diary of daily events’ (Lucian, ‘How To Write History’, §16.1-5; trans. 25-27). Xenophon’s *Anabasis* represents the most famous example of a Greek work written by a soldier in a largely unadorned and clear style. See most recently M.A. Flower, *Xenophon’s Anabasis, or the Expedition of Cyrus*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, 81-116. Similarly, Julius Caesar’s *Commentaries* were regar-

were somewhat simple and ignorant is probably not driven by a wish to provide accurate insight into her material and informants, but rather a desire to gain greater credence. Anna's intent is plainly evident in her comments about the 'writings' and the accounts supplied by veterans adhering to the truth, adding that she checked them against what she had already written and heard about from other sources. As others have recognized, this is reminiscent of the working method of Thucydides, a historian unwilling to accept a single source for an event, 'the accuracy of each being checked by the most stringent and detailed methods possible'.¹⁹ Anna, like all historians, outwardly strives for the truth, and there is a suggestion that truth, or rather the impression of such, was linked to minimalism in Greco-Roman culture. The perceived authoritativeness of Xenophon and Julius Caesar in the ancient world may have had as much to do with their lucid and largely unadorned styles of writing as it did their expertise in warfare.²⁰ Polybius, who largely disregarded rhetorical adornments and favoured a matter-of-fact mode of prose, criticizes a fellow historian for an apparent concern for style over facts, arguing that

ded by contemporaries for their lucid style, free of ornamentation. See F. Adcock, *Caesar as Man of Letters*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956, 63-72.

¹⁹ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατόν ἀκριβεῖα περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελθὼν (Thucydides, I.22). See A. Kambylis, "Zum 'Programm'" (cit. n. 9), 144-145; and J. Chrysostomides, "A Byzantine Historian: Anna Comnena", in D.O. Morgan (ed.), *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1982, 30-46, esp. 33-34.

²⁰ J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 10. The *Ephemeris Belli Troiani* of Diktys of Crete, a work probably written between 66-200CE and well-known in Byzantium, is considered to have adopted the unadorned style of the military diary in order to lend the fictional narrative a greater degree of realism and believability. See S. Merkle, "Telling the True Story of the Trojan War: The Eyewitness Account of Dictys of Crete", in J. Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, 183-196. Byzantine witnesses to Diktys are gathered in P. Gainsford, "Diktys of Crete", *Cambridge Classical Journal* 58 (2012) 58-87, esp. 65-74.

literary elegance should not be seen as a priority for historians.²¹ Seemingly conscious of this sentiment, Byzantine historians often set out by belittling their abilities as a writer and professing an intent to write only the truth, without pretension or concern for rhetorical flourish, even though, in most instances, these authors are in fact erudite and their works not without stylistic embellishment.²² In her *prooimion*, Anna insists that her concern is with her subject rather than flaunting her skills as a writer, and yet in the prior section asserts her knowledge of rhetoric and literature.²³ Anna's statements appear inconsistent, but clearly it was useful for writers of works which strived primarily for accuracy and functionality to declare a disinterest in literary flair. The former general Kekaumenos claimed to be 'devoid of learning', but did not care for the derision this deficiency might draw, since his *Consilia et Narrationes* was not intended as 'a work of poetry' but rather a handbook based on his own experiences and observations. 'Even if the words are somewhat unrefined, if you follow clearly what is said, you will find them very true'.²⁴

²¹ Polybius, vol. 4, XVI.17.9-11. On Polybius' criticism in this instance, see K. Sacks, *Polybius on the Writing of History*, California, University of California Press, 1981, 75-78.

²² A study of the *prooimia* of Middle Byzantine historians has found this practice 'quite normal', even if such a *topos* may strike us as somewhat hypocritical. See I. Grigoriadis, *Linguistic and Literary Studies in the Epitome Historion of John Zonaras*, Thessaloniki, Kentron Vyzantinon Ereunon, 1998, 31-51.

²³ ταύτας δὲ λέξουσα ἔρχομαι οὐχ' ὥς ἐπίδειξιν τινα τῆς περὶ λόγους ποιουμένη ἀσκήσεως [...] (Anna Komnene, pr.1.2-2.1). Anna can also be seen to take great pride in her learning in the preface to her will (Michael Italikos, 106.11-18).

²⁴ Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἄμοιρός εἰμι λόγου· οὐ γὰρ παιδείας ἑλληνικῆς ἐν σχολῇ γέγονα, ἵνα στροφὴν λόγων πορίσωμαι καὶ εὐγλωττίαν διδαχθῶ. καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἐπιμέμψονταί μου τινες δρασσόμενοι τὴν ἀμαθίαν μου, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐχ ὥς ποιητικὸν τοῦτο συνέταξα πρὸς ἄλλους τινάς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς σὲ καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου, τοὺς ἐμούς παῖδας, τοὺς ἐκ τῶν ἐμῶν σπλάγχνων οὓς ὁ Θεός μοι δέδωκεν. συνέταξα δὲ ταῦτα οὐ κομποῖς τισὶ λόγοις καὶ σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις μόνον καὶ μηδὲν ἀγαθὸν ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ ταῦτα ἐξεθέμην ἃ τε ἐποίησα καὶ ἔπαθον καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἔμαθον, πράγματα ἀληθῆ, ἃ καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν πράττονται καὶ γίνονται. καὶ εἰ τάχα ιδιωτικοὶ εἰσιν οἱ λόγοι, πλὴν ἐὰν ὑγιῶς προσέχῃς τοῖς λεγομένοις, ἀληθεστάτους εὐρήσεις (Kekaumenos, 75.30-76.9). For Kekaumenos' learning, which appears to have been more comprehensive than he claims, see C. Roueché, "The Literary

Kekaumenos, a military man, exhibits little concern for fancy literary technique, seeking only to offer an accurate reflection of his experiences in a simple and straightforward manner.²⁵ Perhaps then Byzantine soldiers did chronicle and discuss their experiences in this blunt way, but it may also be that Anna is exploiting this tendency, as well as a historical *topos*, in asserting that her written sources were plainly written and unpretentious, and her oral informants of low status and uncultured. It has been noted that these admissions ‘do little to enhance their reliability’ for modern readers,²⁶ though such statements may have proved more persuasive in reassuring contemporary readers and listeners that the *Alexiad* provided an accurate record of events.

Whatever Anna’s intent in specifying the unassuming nature of her material and informants, Kambylis’ interpretation of the meaning of the passage is undoubtedly more consistent with Anna’s often misconstrued message regarding her sources. Both Howard-Johnston and Frankopan determine that the accounts of veterans to which Anna refers were memoirs.²⁷ Chalandon even suggested that these men documented their experiences at Anna’s behest.²⁸ There is no reason to think that the tendency of soldiers to write memoirs or commission biographical works was unusual and performed only at Anna’s insistence.²⁹ More significantly, it may be doubted that Anna is referring to written testimony at all in this section. Returning to my earlier

Background of Kekaumenos”, in C. Holmes – J. Waring (eds.), *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, Leiden, Brill, 2002, 111-138.

²⁵ For this rhetorical technique in practical literature, see R. Browning, “The Language of Byzantine Literature”, in S. Vryonis (ed.), *The Past in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, Malibu, Undena Publications, 1978, 103-133, esp. 103-104.

²⁶ P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 13.

²⁷ J. Howard-Johnston, “Anna Komnene” (cit. n. 1), 275; and P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 13.

²⁸ F. Chalandon, *Essai sur le règne d’Alexis Ier Comnène*, Paris, A. Picard et fils, 1900, XII.

²⁹ See below, 173-174.

point, it is improbable that uneducated soldiers could have drafted memoirs. Furthermore, Anna only asserts that she ‘gathered information [...] from old soldiers who served under Alexios’; the ‘writings’ appear to represent a different source altogether. Indeed, in translating the text into German, Reinsch interpolated ‘[aus Erzählungen]’ before ‘von alten Soldaten’, confirming that we cannot simply connect the ‘writings’ with the testimony supplied by old soldiers. Reinsch’s insistence that the two modes of information were separate results in an intriguing reading of another part of the same passage. What Sewter and Frankopan render as ‘the accounts (τὰ [...] ἐκδιηγούμενα) given by the old veterans were, in language and thought, similar to the writings (τῶν συγγραμμάτων)’, Reinsch translates thus: ‘Die mündlichen Erzählungen der alten Soldaten waren in Sprache und Gedanken von derselben Qualität wie die schriftlichen Berichte’.³⁰ Evidently, Reinsch considers ‘τὰ [...] ἐκδιηγούμενα’ to refer to oral accounts, and this is difficult to argue against given that Anna does not explicitly state that the testimony provided by veteran soldiers took written form. Mention of these accounts being similar in ‘λέξεως καὶ διανοίας’ to the aforementioned writings does not necessarily identify them as written texts, for the συγγραμμάτων may have been composed in the vernacular.³¹ The notion that Anna is describing oral accounts

³⁰ Anna Komnene, trans. Reinsch, 503.

³¹ There is an intriguing instance where Anna retains the vernacular, quoting in the ‘common idiom’ a popular song about Alexios, which she then ‘translates’ into pure Greek (Anna Komnene, II.4.9). While one finds nothing like this in a military context, there is a peculiar use of an army colloquialism during the account of a victory of Nicholas Maurokatakalon over a Pecheneg force in 1087. Anna includes the phrase τὸν οὕτως καλούμενον κοπὸν (translated by Sewter as ‘hacked off’), which, she explains, was ‘an expression known to soldiers’ (λέξεις δὲ αὕτη συνήθης τοῖς στρατιώταις; Anna Komnene, VII.1.1.16-17; trans. 186). The obvious explanation for the inclusion of this phrase is that Anna came across the saying through her sources. For traces of the vernacular in the *Alexiad*, see G. Buckler, *Anna Komnene: A Study*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1929, 488-497; A. Kazhdan – A.W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, California, University of California Press, 1985, 84; and R. Beaton, “The Rhetoric of Poverty: The Lives and Opinions of Theodore Prodromos”, *BMGS* 11 (1987)

in this instance is lent further credence by her declaration that she compared her own history with what the veterans ‘had said (τὰ λεγόμενα)’.

Anna supports her claim to have spoken to survivors of Alexios’ reign by stressing at several junctures that there were witnesses to the events she describes. Her portrait of Robert Guiscard concludes: ‘as I have often heard many say’.³² The description of Guiscard’s siege of Dyrrachion in 1081 is interrupted by the statement ‘according to the person who told me’, indicating an eyewitness informant.³³ Whilst narrating Alexios’ rapid campaign against the Pechenegs in 1091, Anna explains that ‘those present related to us’ the angry reaction of George Palaiologos at not having been involved.³⁴ Anna reveals her judgments on the conduct of the rebel Rhapsomates to be based on ‘what I heard about him’.³⁵ At one point, Anna explains that ‘there are men still alive today who knew my father and tell me of his deeds’, reflecting that their contribution to the *Alexiad* was ‘not inconsiderable’.³⁶

Despite this, Anna’s insistence that she derived much information from oral correspondence with veteran soldiers of Alexios’ reign is debatable when set against practical considerations. The conditions of her apparent exile after an abortive coup against her brother John II Komnenos would seem to contravene any notion that she conversed with such individuals:³⁷

1-28, esp. 9-10. For the growth of vernacular literature in this period, see R. Beaton, “*De Vulgari Eloquentia* in Twelfth-Century Byzantium”, *ByzF* 12 (1988) 261-268.

³² ὡς πολλῶν λεγόντων πολλάκις ἀκήκοα (Anna Komnene, I.10.4.50).

³³ ὡς ὁ ταῦτα διηγησάμενος ἔλεγεν (Anna Komnene, IV.5.1.78; trans. 117).

³⁴ οἱ γὰρ συμπαρόντες ἡμῖν διηγοῦντο (Anna Komnene, VIII.2.5).

³⁵ ὡς ἔγωγε περὶ τούτου ἤκουον (Anna Komnene, IX.2.2.52-53).

³⁶ εἰσὶν οἵτινες εἰς τὴν τήμερον περιόντες καὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἐμὸν ἐγνωκότες καὶ τὰ κατ’ αὐτὸν ἀφηγούμενοι, ἀφ’ ὧν καὶ οὐκ ὀλίγα τῆς ἱστορίας ἐνταυθοὶ συνηράνιστο (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.4.20-24; trans. 420-421).

³⁷ καὶ οὐδὲ τοῖς ἀφανεστέροις ἐξέσται τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρ’ ἡμᾶς φοιτᾶν, μὴ ὅτι γε δι’ ὧν μανθάνειν εἶχομεν, ἅπερ παρ’ ἄλλων διακηκοότες ἐτύγχανον, καὶ τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς

‘Not even the least important people are allowed to visit us, neither those from whom we could have learnt news they had heard from others, nor my father’s most intimate friends. For thirty years now, I swear it by the souls of the most blessed emperors, I have not seen, I have not spoken to a friend of my father; many of them of course have passed away, but many too are prevented by fear because of the change in our fortunes. For the powers-that-be have condemned us to this ridiculous position so that we might not be visible.’

The question that arises from this lamentation is how Anna could have conducted interviews with those who participated in Alexios’ wars. We might speculate that monks were excluded from this purported ban, with Buckler otherwise finding Anna’s alleged capacity to communicate with former soldiers ‘not easy to explain’.³⁸ Yet the truth is perhaps more straightforward. Much has been made of Anna’s expressions of personal lament in the *Alexiad*, with most relating this self-pity to Anna’s disillusionment with political defeat and subsequent exile to the *Kecharitomene* monastery.³⁹ Neville, however, has challenged these ‘unnecessary political readings’ of the *Alexiad*, skilfully arguing that Anna’s adoption of this tragic voice is actually something of a literary persona, a rhetorical device which enabled her to talk freely about her existence and also to exploit classical traditions of female lamentation in order to, conversely, establish her suitability for the typically masculine job of history writing, her evident ability to control her emotions whilst writing

οἰκειοτάτοις. εἰς τριακοστὸν γὰρ τοῦτο ἔτος, μὰ τὰς τῶν μακαριωτάτων αὐτοκρατόρων ψυχάς, οὐκ ἔθεασάμην, οὐκ εἶδον, οὐχ’ ὠμίληκιν ἀνθρώπῳ πατρώῳ, τοῦτο μὲν τῶν πολλῶν ἀπερρυηκότων, τοῦτο δὲ τῶν πολλῶν ἀπειργομένων τῷ φόβῳ. καὶ τούτοις γὰρ ἡμᾶς κατεδίκασαν οἱ κρατοῦντες τοῖς ἀτοπήμασι μὴδὲ θεατοὺς εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ἐστυγημένους τοῖς πλείοσιν (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.6.56-64; trans. 422). For the plot against John, see B. Hill, “Actions Speak Louder Than Words: Anna Komnene’s Attempted Usurpation”, in T. Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene* (cit. n. 2), 45-62.

³⁸ G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena* (cit. n. 31), 43.

³⁹ For discussion of this aspect of the *Alexiad*, see G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena* (cit. n. 31), 35-46; and E. Quandahl – S.C. Jarratt, “‘To Recall him... will be a Subject of Lamentation’: Anna Comnena as Rhetorical Historiographer”, *Rhetorica* 26 (2008) 301-335.

conforming to the standards of her male counterparts.⁴⁰ Consequently, it is likely that Anna exaggerates the conditions of her ‘exile’ at the Kecharitome-ne monastery, which do not appear to have been anywhere near as restrictive as she maintains.⁴¹ It is therefore probable that she had greater freedom to meet survivors of her father’s reign than she would have the reader believe.

Yet there is another, more significant obstacle to accepting Anna’s claims to have derived information from the oral testimony of eyewitnesses. It is generally thought that Anna began working on her history c.1143, as she notes that she collected the bulk of her evidence during the reign of Manuel.⁴² By this time, however, most of the men who served Alexios and feature prominently in the *Alexiad* had died.⁴³ Anna claims that she heard much from her uncles on both sides.⁴⁴ Yet we know that George Palaiologos, Nikephoros Melissenos, and John and Michael Doukas had died by 1136, probably ear-

⁴⁰ L. Neville, “Lamentation, History and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene’s *Alexiad*”, *GRBS* 53.1 (2013) 192-218.

⁴¹ Numerous sources attest to Anna’s interactions with the outside world during her apparent period of exile. An encomium Michael Italikos was commissioned to write for Anna’s mother Eirene, probably c.1128, notes the presence of Anna among his audience (Michael Italikos, 151.12-13). George Tornikios’ epitaph for Anna describes how she gathered a number of scholars to her circle, discussing philosophy and commissioning commentaries on Aristotle. Mention of the death of Anna’s mother places this development some years after John II’s accession (George Tornikios, 283.9-301.19). For further discussion see R. Browning, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Anna Comnena”, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society* 188 (1962) 1-12. In c.1139, Theodore Prodromos wrote to Anna bemoaning his financial plight (Theodore Prodromos, XXXVIII). For Anna’s surroundings at the *Kecharitome* monastery, see P. Gautier, “Le *Typikon* de la Théotokos Kécharitôménè”, 136-139.

⁴² ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ τὰ πολλὰ τούτων συνελεξάμην, καὶ κράτιστα ἐπὶ τοῦ μετὰ τὸν ἐμὸν πατέρα τρίτου τὰ τῆς βασιλείας σκῆπτρα διέποντος (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.5.47-49). For Anna writing during the reign of Manuel, see P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 12; and Anna Komnene, ed. Reinsch – Kambylis, 5-6, n. 24.

⁴³ This concern is likewise raised by P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 75.

⁴⁴ Anna Komnene, XIV.7.7.76-78.

lier.⁴⁵ Alexios' brothers Isaac and Adrian Komnenos passed much sooner, no later than 1105.⁴⁶ Only Alexios' youngest brother, Nikephoros, may still have been alive after 1136, though little is known of his career, and that he is mentioned only once suggests Anna did not rely on him for information.⁴⁷ These observations can be applied to other figures who feature prominently in the *Alexiad*. Nikephoros Katakalon Euphorbenos, Anna's brother-in-law and close associate of Nikephoros Bryennios, died within a few years of Alexios.⁴⁸ Eustathios Kamytzes is another who appears among the deceased in the *typikon* of the monastery of Christ Pantokrator, drafted in late 1136.⁴⁹ Very

⁴⁵ The *typikon* of the *Pantokrator* monastery, issued in October 1136, lists these men among the dead: P. Gautier, "Le *Typikon* du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator", 1. 230, 233-235; also P. Gautier, "L'obituaire du *Typikon* du Pantokrator", *REB* 27 (1969) 235-262, esp. 253-254. D.I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, London, Athlone P., 1968, 66-70, puts the date of John Doukas' death at any time between 1110 and 1136, such is the paucity of evidence. Nikephoros Melissenos passed in November 1104: D. Papachryssanthou, "La date de la mort du sébastocrator Isaac Comnène et de quelques événements contemporains", *REB* 21 (1963) 250-255, esp. 252. Intriguingly, both Michael and John Doukas died as monks, the latter having taken the name Antonios when he entered the Theotokos Evergetis monastery c.1110: M. Kouroupou – J. F. Vannier, "Commémoraisons des Comnènes", 13 & 14, with discussion at 53-54, where Michael Doukas' death is dated c.1110-1115; also P. Gautier, "Le *Typikon* de la Théotokos Évergétis", 1. 1346-1347, with discussion at 10-11. For the sake of completion we should mention Michael Taronites, who married Alexios' sister Maria in 1061. This in any case would suggest a date of death not long into the twelfth century, though his exile for his role in the revolt of Nikephoros Diogenes surely confirms he would not have been close to Anna (Anna Komnene, IX.8.4).

⁴⁶ D. Papachryssanthou, "La date de la mort" (cit. n. 45); P. Gautier, "Le *Typikon* du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator", 1. 220, 227; P. Gautier, "L'obituaire" (cit. n. 45), 249, 253; also M. Kouroupou – J. F. Vannier, "Commémoraisons des Comnènes", 55-56, 61-62. Isaac and Adrian also became monks towards the end of their lives, with both taking the monastic name John.

⁴⁷ M. Kouroupou – J. F. Vannier, "Commémoraisons des Comnènes", 65-66.

⁴⁸ Theodore Prodromos, II.18-19; P. Gautier, "Le *Typikon* du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator", 1.226; and P. Gautier, "L'obituaire" (cit. n. 45), 252-253.

⁴⁹ P. Gautier, "Le *Typikon* du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator", 1.249; and Id. "L'obituaire" (cit. n. 48), 256-257.

few of Alexios' key subordinates would have survived the reign of John II Komnenos. Anna admits as much in her *prooimion*, where she relates that the 'fathers and grandfathers of some men alive today saw these things'.⁵⁰ This would be a peculiar thing to say had the 'fathers and grandfathers' been around when Anna was writing. A similar state of affairs is apparent in the aforementioned passage where Anna laments her inability to converse with friends of her father, conceding that 'many of them have passed away'. On account of the number of deceased figures and Anna's apparent exile, Buckler concluded that Anna collected all her first-hand testimony prior to her father's death in 1118.⁵¹ Similarly, Kambylis proposes that Anna may have immediately transcribed conversations between her father and George Palaiologos.⁵² Yet such suggestions disregard Anna's own statements about conducting much of her research during Manuel's reign. Furthermore, there is nothing to indicate that Anna contemplated a historical work prior to the death of Nikephoros Bryennios in c.1137.⁵³ After all, Anna cites Nikephoros' failure to complete a chronicle of her father's life as her reason for undertaking the project.⁵⁴ Should this not convince, Anna's mention of thirty years elapsing since she last met her father's friends, together with the cluster of studies which identify parts of the *Alexiad* as a response to Manuel's handling of the Second Crusade and indeed his reign in general, firmly place the composition of the work long after Alexios' death.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ ἐνίων γὰρ τῶν νῦν ὄντων ἀνθρώπων οἱ μὲν πατέρες, οἱ δὲ πάπποι ἐγένοντο οἱ τούτων συνίστορες (Anna Komnene, pr.2.3.45-46).

⁵¹ G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena* (cit. n. 31), 231-232.

⁵² A. Kambylis, "Zum 'Programm'" (cit. n. 9), 143.

⁵³ See J. Chrysostomides, "A Byzantine Historian" (cit. n. 19), 33.

⁵⁴ Anna Komnene, pr. 3.

⁵⁵ See R.D. Thomas, "Anna Comnena's Account of the First Crusade, History and Politics in the Reign of the Emperors Alexius I and Manuel I Comnenus", *BMGS* 15 (1991) 269-312; P. Magdalino, "The Pen of the Aunt: Echoes of the Mid-Twelfth Century in the *Alexiad*", in T. Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene* (cit. n. 2), 15-43; and P. Stephenson,

The evidence then does not support the notion that Anna interviewed her father's leading generals before writing her history. Indeed, the *Alexiad* is not especially balanced or consistent in its portrayals of Alexios' kinsmen and subordinate commanders, with numerous personalities receiving poor coverage and others mysteriously vanishing from the narrative having hitherto been prominent. Yet while there is some cause to think that Anna was poorly informed about the careers of certain individuals,⁵⁶ her uneven reporting cannot be attributed solely to gaps in her source material. Pertinent are France's remarks on Anna's record of the First Crusade, an observation which could be extended to the *Alexiad* as a whole: 'Anna's account [...] is very inconsistent – sometimes she is well informed, at other times quite the opposite. This reflects both the limited source material available to her and the way in which she selected information in order to make her case'.⁵⁷ In regard to Alexios' relatives and generals, it is never clear whether any minimal, negative or indifferent depictions are by Anna's own design or a consequence of her material. It may be that several of Anna's uncles are presented in subdued fashion because their careers ended in rebellion, something Anna thought unwise to mention given that it reflected unfavourably on her father, and which inevitably led to resentment on her part.⁵⁸ We might also postulate

"Anna Komnena's *Alexiad* as a Source for the Second Crusade?", *Journal of Medieval History* 29 (2003) 41-54.

⁵⁶ The favourable yet sparse coverage of the campaigns of *domestikos* of the west, Gregory Pakourianos, who died in 1086, indicates that information on him may have been scant. See P. Frankopan, "A Victory of Gregory Pakourianos against the Pechenegs", *Bsl* 57.2 (1996) 278-281.

⁵⁷ J. France, "Anna Komnena, the *Alexiad* and the First Crusade", *Reading Medieval Studies* 10 (1984) 20-38, esp. 32.

⁵⁸ It is suggested that Anna deliberately played down Nikephoros Melissenos' role in military successes as part of an effort to craft a negative portrait of this individual, perhaps because he rebelled against Alexios. See P. Frankopan, "The Fall of Nicaea" (cit. n. 10), 168-170, 183. Frankopan also proposes that Adrian Komnenos' sudden disappearance from the *Alexiad* may be similarly attributable to him joining a conspiracy against his brother. See P. Frankopan, "Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium", *En-*

that Anna writing during the reign of Manuel and endeavouring to subtly criticize his rule was another factor, given that at least one figure depicted unflatteringly in the *Alexiad* belonged to a family who would later provide some of Manuel's most prominent generals.⁵⁹ The constant centrality of Alexios in the narrative could also account for the diminished role of select commanders and the lessening of their successes, lest they overshadow those of their emperor.⁶⁰ Identifying the precise reasons behind Anna's portrayal of her father's generals is surely a subject for another study, but we should be wary of making judgments on the information available to Anna based on coverage alone, with simple ignorance of her uncles' careers seemingly

glish Historical Review 122 [495] (2007) 1-34. I. Polemis, *The Doukai* (cit. n. 45), 69 & n. 13 argues that Anna's 'somewhat restrained' treatment of John Doukas, full of gaps and rarely praising, is indicative of some disdain on the author's part, perhaps owing to Doukas possibly plotting against Alexios. See K. Sinclair, *War Writing* (cit. n. 14), 386-389. To this list we might also add another of Anna's relatives, Gregory Taronites, whose successes on the Black Sea coast in 1103, though greatly extolled in Theophylact of Ohrid's letters to the general, are mentioned only fleetingly in the *Alexiad*, such marginalization and distortion allowing Anna to simplify her depiction of the *doux* of Trebizond as a scheming rebel (Theophylact of Ohrid, vol. 2, 415-417, 433, 473-475). It should be noted here that Anna frequently omits details that would reflect badly on her father and her family. On these, see B. Leib, "Les silences d'Anne Comnène", *Bsl* 19 (1958) 1-10.

⁵⁹ While Anna reports extensively on the operations of the *meas doux* Isaac Kontostephanos against the Normans, he is presented as incompetent and indecisive, being defeated by a woman and only achieving some success when he follows Alexios' advice, eventually being replaced without further mention (Anna Komnene, XII.8-9, XIII.7). His miserable portrayal is striking when set against the acclaimed heroism of the *meas doux* and brother-in-law of the emperor Manuel, Stephen Kontostephanos, who perished during the recapture of Kerkyra in 1149, around the time when Anna would have been writing (John Kinnamos, 96-98; and Theodore Prodromos, XLVIII-LI). Whether there was any animosity between Anna and the Kontostephanos family is not known, but one cannot help but conclude that Isaac's depiction undermines the Kontostephanoi. If Manuel was a target of Anna's criticism, then why not also subtly denigrate his brother-in-law and leading general?

⁶⁰ For the influence of Alexios on the narrative focus of the *Alexiad*, see J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene" (cit. n. 1), 300; and J. Ljubarskij, "Why is the *Alexiad* a Masterpiece of Byzantine Literature?", in T. Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene* (cit. n. 2), 169-186, esp. 181.

improbable. Despite some unevenness in their presentation, it is generally believed that Anna called upon the testimony of her father's generals in some shape or form, with Nikephoros Bryennios, George Palaiologos, John Doukas and Tatikios all suggested as possible informants.⁶¹ The narrative scope of the *Alexiad* is such that we cannot doubt her basic claim to have derived information from those personalities at the centre of the events described.

If, for now, we pursue the idea that their stories reached Anna by verbal transmission, two realistic options present themselves. The first is that descendants of key participants supplied Anna with material. Several members of the Palaiologos family are attested during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, including one Michael Palaiologos, a notable general who retired as a monk prior to his death in 1156.⁶² Leo Kamytzes was also an important figure during the reign of Manuel,⁶³ while Constantine Kamytzes was married to Maria Komnene, daughter of Anna's sister Theodora.⁶⁴ Peter Aliphas, a Norman knight who initially fought against Alexios before serving under

⁶¹ See F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), XI-XII; and P. Frankopan, "Turning Latin into Greek: Anna Komnene and the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*", *Journal of Medieval History* 39.1 (2013) 80-99, esp. 84-88, particularly in relation to possible informants for Anna's account of the Norman conflict between 1081-1085. Frankopan speculates that the *meas doux* John Doukas provided Anna 'with a substantial amount of material which appears in the *Alexiad*'. See P. Frankopan, "Perception and Projection of Prejudice: Anna Komnena, the *Alexiad* and the First Crusade", in S.B. Edgington – S. Lambert (eds.), *Gendering the Crusades*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, 59-76, esp. 64-65. Tatikios is considered to have been one of Anna's chief informants, furnishing reports on the passage of the First Crusade which formed the basis of Anna's account of the expedition. See F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), xvii; G. Buckler, *Anna Komnena* (cit. n. 31), 231 n. 8; S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, *The First Crusade*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1951, 224-225; J. Shepard, "When Greek meets Greek: Alexius Komnenus and Bohemond in 1097-98", *BMGS* 12 (1988) 185-277, esp. 196-197; and R.-J. Lilie, *Byzantium and the Crusader States, 1096-1204*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, 35-37.

⁶² John Kinnamos, 151.7-18; Theodore Prodromos, LXV-LXVI.

⁶³ L. Stiernon, "Notes de titulature et de prosopographie byzantines. Sébaste et Gambros", *REB* 23 (1965) 222-243, esp. 233, 240.

⁶⁴ Theodore Prodromos, LXIV.

him, had numerous descendants bearing the name Petraliphas at the imperial court;⁶⁵ indeed, it has been speculated that these may have been the source for Anna's detailed information on the activities of their famous ancestor.⁶⁶ There is evidence from council edicts that two of Anna's cousins – Constantine and Adrian Komnenos, sons of Alexios' brother Isaac – were still alive as late as 1147 and 1157 respectively.⁶⁷ While we cannot prove that Anna conversed with these individuals, or indeed other descendants of key figures in the *Alexiad*, the connections were clearly not lost on her, given her aforementioned statement that the 'fathers and grandfathers of some men alive today saw these things'.⁶⁸ Anna's extended family and acquaintances provided a good conduit to useful information, and it is logical to think she would have exploited this. Moreover, there are firm indications that Anna acquired some of her information from oral traditions which went back to Alexios' day. Anna recounts the bravery of one Aspietes in battle 'according to a report circulated at that time', the use of φήμη suggesting an older oral account, possibly learned, one might conjecture, from members of the Aspie-

⁶⁵ See D. Nicol, "Symbiosis and Integration: Some Greco-Latin Families in Byzantium in the 11th to 13th Centuries", *ByzF* 7 (1979) 113-135, esp. 131-135; and A. Kazhdan, "Latins and Franks in Byzantium: Perception and Reality from the Eleventh to Twelfth Century", in A. Laiou – R. Mottahedeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001, 83-100, esp. 94-95.

⁶⁶ P. Frankopan, "Turning Latin into Greek" (cit. n. 61), 85-86, where the possibility of the family commissioning a work to commemorate Aliphas is mooted.

⁶⁷ G.A. Ralles – M. Potles (eds.), *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, Athina 1852-59 (repr. 1966), V, 307 (for Constantine); I. Sakellion (ed.), *Πατμιακὴ Βιβλιοθήκη*, Athina 1890, 317 (for Adrian). For what little we know of Adrian and Constantine, see L. Stiernon, "Notes de titulature et de prosopographie byzantines: Adrien (Jean) et Constantin Comnène, sébastes", *REB* 21 (1963) 179-198. Another of Anna's cousins, one Alexios, may also have been alive around the time she was writing. See L. Stiernon, "Notes [...] Sébaste et Gambros" (cit. n. 63), 227-228.

⁶⁸ Anna Komnene, pr.2.3.45-46; trans. 4.

tes family who continued to hold important posts during Manuel's reign.⁶⁹ We have already noted Anna 'hearing' about the activities of the rebel Rhapsomates on Cyprus; according to one hypothesis, her source was a mythical oral tale which came to reflect the recent circumstances of Rhapsomates' revolt.⁷⁰ With this in mind, it is not implausible that Anna could have derived information from tales transmitted orally since the time of Alexios.⁷¹

The second possibility is that Anna herself vividly recalled tales she had once heard from family members and key participants. Indeed, she claims to have 'often heard the emperor and George Palaiologos discussing matters in my presence'.⁷² Frankopan expresses doubt as to how often, and indeed *why* Alexios and Palaiologos would reminisce about old battles, but there is little cause to question this particular assertion of Anna.⁷³ We know that the anecdotal tradition – war-themed tales in particular – was prevalent during this period, evident in the works of Kekaumenos and Nikephoros Bryennios.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ ὡς ἡ φήμη τὸ τηνικαῦτα ἐκήρυττε (Anna Komnene, XII.2.1.92-95). For Aspietes and his family, see A. Savvides, "Notes on the Armeno-Byzantine Family of Aspietes, late 11th-early 13th Centuries", *Bsl* 52 (1991) 70-79.

⁷⁰ R. Beaton, "Byzantine Historiography and Modern Greek Oral Poetry: The Case of Rapsomatis", *BMGS* 10 (1986) 41-50, esp. 45.

⁷¹ As further evidence of this oral culture one may cite the tradition of orally-transmitted songs about famous individuals and families that circulated along the eastern borderlands from the early tenth century. For general discussion see H. Grégoire, "Études sur l'épopée byzantine", *Revue des Études Grecques* 46 (1933), esp. 48-63; and H-G. Beck, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur*, München, C.H. Beck, 1971, 57-97, esp. 52-62.

⁷² μάλιστα δὲ καὶ αὐτοπροσώπως περὶ τούτων διηγουμένων πολλάκις ἤκουον τοῦ τε αὐτοκράτορος καὶ Γεωργίου τοῦ Παλαιολόγου (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.5.45-47; trans. 421).

⁷³ P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 14.

⁷⁴ For Bryennios, see J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene" (cit. n. 1), 282-288; for Kekaumenos, see C. Roueché, "The Literary Background of Kekaumenos" (cit. n. 24); and Ead., "Byzantine Writers and Readers: Storytelling in the Eleventh Century", in R. Beaton (ed.), *The Greek Novel, AD 1-1985*, London, Croom Helm, 1998, 123-133, for tenth-century developments in Byzantine stories and storytellers.

According to Michael Psellos, Isaac I Komnenos would entertain the court by ‘telling stories of times past, recounting all the witty sayings of [...] the Emperor Basil (II) the Great’.⁷⁵ By the twelfth century, literature, including historical works, was frequently performed orally at court, and we may surmise that elite audiences were especially interested in stories involving their fathers and grandfathers.⁷⁶ It may have been in such an environment where Anna listened to her father and uncle, along with others, reciting heroic episodes from yesteryear, either from writings or from memory. And Anna might be expected to remember certain tales rather well if she was exposed to them regularly enough. She reveals that the story of Alexios’ return journey with captive Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder was one she had ‘heard [...] many times’.⁷⁷ While relating the battle of Dristra, Anna digresses after describing a blow one Nikephoros Diogenes dealt a pursuing Pecheneg: ‘In later years we heard Alexios tell that story [...] when the conversation and the subject of discussion compelled it, he would sometimes recall his adventures to us, his relatives, in our own circle, especially if we put much pressure on him to do so’.⁷⁸ While I would concur with Frankopan’s reservations over the honesty of these recollections, it is to be expected that Alexios and his

⁷⁵ κατεῖχε τὲ ἡμᾶς ἄχρις ἐσπέρας, ἀρχαῖά τε διηγούμενος καὶ ὅποσα ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκεῖνος Βασίλειος, ὁ τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ παῖς, ἐπικαίρως ἐφθέγγετο (Michael Psellos, VII.76). Upon his death, Isaac’s father Manuel entrusted his sons to the care of Basil, so it is likely that Isaac heard these stories from the man himself (Nikephoros Bryennios, 75.9-13).

⁷⁶ See P. Magdalino, *The Empire* (cit. n. 14), 339-353; M. Mullett, “Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople”, in M. Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries* (BAR Int. Series 221), Oxford 1984, 173-201; and L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 29-32.

⁷⁷ ταῦτα ἐγὼ ἐκεῖνου διηγουμένου πολλάκις ἤκουον (Anna Komnene, I.6.9.85-86).

⁷⁸ καὶ ὡς τοῦ βασιλέως ἐν ὑστέροις χρόνοις διηγουμένου ἠκούομεν [...] ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὁ λόγος καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἡ φύσις αὐτὸν ἠνάγκαζε καὶ τὰ κατ’ αὐτὸν πρὸς ἡμᾶς κυκλόθεν τοὺς οἰκείους αὐτῷ ἐνίοτε ἐκλαλεῖν καὶ ταῦτα παρ’ ἡμῶν πολλὰ βιαζόμενον (Anna Komnene, VII.3.11.37-44; trans. 195-196).

colleagues exaggerated and embellished their feats.⁷⁹ With regard to Anna's account of the battle of Kalavrye, where the young Alexios defeated the army of the rebel Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder, Charles Oman remarked: 'No doubt she accurately put down her father's account of his doings, and we are really reading Alexios' version of his fight'.⁸⁰ This observation could surely be extended to all of Anna's records of her father's battles.

Nevertheless, it is striking that Anna rarely cites her father as a source for specific episodes, and in the aforementioned instance where she does, she stresses that Alexios' heroics could be corroborated. Having told of how her father slew a pursuing Pecheneg, Anna notes: 'Nor was he the only one to be killed by the emperor; according to the testimony of those present, others met the same fate'.⁸¹ After describing Alexios' expedition to Dalmatia to establish solid provisions for its defence, Anna insists that the operation was more demanding than her brief report suggests: 'many eyewitnesses, still alive today, bear witness to the strain caused by that tour on the emperor'.⁸² By citing the testimony of other participants as her source, rather than Alexios himself, Anna, it seems, was attempting to elicit greater admiration for her father's labours. Therefore, while Anna asserts that her father was an important source, she is reluctant to attribute specific information to him, lest readers doubt the accuracy and impartiality of the testimony. Moreover, she would not have wished to portray her father as a braggart, given that boasting of one's accomplishments was deemed a trait unbecoming of soldiers during

⁷⁹ P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 14.

⁸⁰ C. Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, A.D. 378-1278, London, Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1924 rev. ed., 226 n. 1.

⁸¹ οὐκ αὐτὸν δὲ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλους, ὡς οἱ τότε συμπάροντες διενίσταντο, ἀνείλεν (Anna Komnene, VII.3.11.32-33; trans. 195, with amendments).

⁸² ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν λόγος ῥαδίαν ἴσως τὴν τοιαύτην οἰκονομίαν τοῖς ἀκροαταῖς παρίστησιν· ὁπόσον δὲ τὸν ἰδρῶτα ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ τῷ τότε ὑπέστη, μαρτυροῦσι πολλοὶ τῶν τότε παρόντων καὶ εἰσέτι καὶ νῦν περιόντων (Anna Komnene, IX.1.2.15-18; trans. 237).

this period.⁸³ Indeed, she stresses that ‘nobody ever heard the emperor say anything boastful in public’.⁸⁴ This concern correlates with Anna’s declaration that she collected much of her evidence during the reign of Manuel, ‘at a time when all the flattery and lies about his grandfather had disappeared [...] no one makes the slightest attempt to over-praise the departed, telling the facts just as they are and describing things just as they happened’.⁸⁵ The reader is thus assured that Anna’s sources possessed no particular allegiance towards Alexios.

Anna’s self-doubt about her portrayal of Alexios is evident throughout the *Alexiad*.⁸⁶ The fear is explicitly acknowledged in the opening to her work: ‘Someone might conclude that in composing the history of my father I am glorifying myself; the history, wherever I express admiration for any act of his, may seem wholly false and mere panegyric’.⁸⁷ We find very similar concerns

⁸³ John Kinnamos claims that Manuel I Komnenos, having single-handedly routed a Turkish contingent, neglected to respond to inquiries about his feats, thus ‘averting suspicion of ignoble boasting’ (John Kinnamos, 62.15-20; trans. 55). The sentiment is shared by the eponymous hero of the epic poem *Digenes Akrites*, said to be ‘ashamed’ to relate his heroic feats, ‘in case you think me boastful, friends; for he who narrates his own feats at length is thought a braggart by his hearers’ (*Digenes Akrites*, GVI.596-599; trans. 187). It would seem that Kekaumenos was not alone in thinking that ‘the arrogant man has God against him’ (Kekaumenos, 54.6-11).

⁸⁴ πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἔξωθεν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀπάντων ἤκουσεν ὑπέρκομπόν τι τὸν αὐτοκράτορα διηγούμενον (Anna Komnene, VII.3.11.44-45; trans. 196).

⁸⁵ ὅτε καὶ πᾶσα κολακεία καὶ ψεῦδος τῷ πάππῳ αὐτῷ συναπέρρευσεν, πάντων τὸν ἐφιστάμενον μὲν θρόνον κολακεύοντων, πρὸς δὲ τὸν ἀπερρυηκότα μηδὲν τι μὲν θωπείας ἐνδεικνυμένων, γυμνὰ δὲ τὰ πράγματα διηγούμενων καὶ αὐτὰ λεγόντων ὥσπερ ἐσχήκασιν (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.5.49-52; trans. 421).

⁸⁶ For another such instance not quoted here, see Anna Komnene, I.16.9. Anna is similarly concerned about appearing to overstate the greatness of her grandmother, Anna Dalassene (Anna Komnene, III.8).

⁸⁷ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐκείνου πράξεις προελομένη συγγράφειν δέδοικα τὸ ὑφορμοῦν τὲ καὶ ὑποτρέχον, μή ποτε λογίσαιτό τις τὰ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πατρὸς συγγράφουσαν τὰ ἑαυτῆς ἐπαινεῖν, καὶ ψεῦδος ἅπαν δόξη τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας πρᾶγμα καὶ ἐγκώμιον ἄντικρυς, εἴ τι τῶν ἐκείνου θαυμάζοιμι (Anna Komnene, pr. 2.2.28-32; trans. 4). In the classical tradition,

over acceptance expressed near the close of the *Alexiad*:⁸⁸ ‘I chose to write the truth about a good man, and if that man happens to be the historian’s father, then let his name be added as an appendage [...]. If this [work] proves that I love my father as well as truth, I do not fear criticism that I have suppressed the facts.’⁸⁹ Gibbon first observed ‘the perpetual strain of panegyric and apology’ which leads us ‘to question the veracity of the author’.⁹⁰ Anna strives to dispel accusations of bias in her *prooimion*, noting, in a passage taken straight from Polybius, her role as an impartial historian who is able to praise her enemies and censure kin where necessary.⁹¹ A crucial part of ensuring accuracy, Anna continues, was consulting ‘the evidence of the actual events and of eyewitnesses’.⁹² This establishes an immediate link between eyewitness testimony and truth, particularly in regard to Alexios’ deeds. We

panegyric was considered to have no place in historiography. See Polybius, vol. 3, X.21.8; Lucian, ‘How To Write History’, § 7. Similar views are expressed by numerous Byzantine historians and chroniclers. See A. Cameron, *Agathias*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, 58-59; and I. Grigoriadis, *Linguistic* (cit. n. 22), 30-37, 41-42.

⁸⁸ An additional example may be cited: ‘Let no one suspect that I lie about the emperor - for I am speaking the truth’ (μηδ’ ὡς καταψευδομένην τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ὑφοράσθω· τὰ γὰρ ἀληθῆ λέγω: Anna Komnene, XII.3.4.9-10; trans. 338).

⁸⁹ ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ τὰληθῆ προειλόμην συγγράφειν καὶ περὶ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ· εἰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν συμβέβηκεν εἶναι καὶ πατέρα τοῦ συγγραφέως, τὸ μὲν τοῦ πατρὸς ὄνομα προσερρίφθω ἐνταῦθα καὶ κείσθω ἐκ τοῦ παρέλκοντος [...] εἴ δ’, ὅπερ εἶπον, καὶ φιλοπάτορας ἡμᾶς συναποδείκνυσιν ὁ καιρὸς οὗτος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο τὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐπηλυγάζαι τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων μεμψίμοιρον (Anna Komnene, XV.3.4.40-56; trans. 438, with amendments).

⁹⁰ E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Womersley, London, 1776-1789 (London, Allen Lane, 1994 rev. ed.), vol. 3, 69. For Anna’s protestations on behalf of objectivity, see also R. Macrides, “The historian in the history”, in C.N. Constantinides – N.M. Panagiotakes – E. Jeffreys – A.D. Angelou (eds.), *Philhellen. Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, Venezia, Istituto ellenico di studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia, 1996, 205-224, esp. 218-220.

⁹¹ Anna Komnene, pr.2.3.37-42; Polybius, vol. 1, I.14. For recognition of the link, see J. Chrysostomides “A Byzantine Historian” (cit. n. 19), 37-39, 43-44 n. 20.

⁹² τῶν ἑωρακόντων τὰ πράγματα αὐτοὺς τὲ καὶ τὰ πράγματα μαρτυραμένη (Anna Komnene, pr.2.3.44-45; trans. 4).

observe this connection again in Anna's account of Alexios' actions against heretics, which she concludes upon a defiant note: 'Let no one find fault with the history [...]. There are plenty of people living today who are witnesses to what I have described, and I could not be accused of lying'.⁹³ It may be that Anna's frequent reminders that her version of events could be corroborated by eyewitnesses are designed to convince the reader of the veracity of her work, rather than provide an earnest reflection of her sources.⁹⁴

So obsessed is Anna with the primacy of autopsy that she offers the following to reassure her audience: 'Most of the time, we were ourselves present, for we accompanied our father and mother'.⁹⁵ Since Anna was born in 1083, it is unlikely that her father took her on expeditions prior to 1099, during which time he was most active as a soldier.⁹⁶ Family members are said to have joined Alexios during his campaign against Bolkan of Dalmatia in 1094; however, only the Empress Eirene is mentioned.⁹⁷ When news of Bohemond's invasion

⁹³ καὶ μή τις ἐπιμεμφέσθω τὴν ἱστορίαν ὡς δῆθεν δωροδοκοῦσαν τὴν συγγραφὴν· τῶν γὰρ νῦν ὄντων μάρτυρες εἰσὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀφηγουμένων, καὶ οὐκ ἂν ψευδηγορίας ἀλοίημεν (Anna Komnene, XIV.9.5.10-12; trans. 429).

⁹⁴ In the preface to her will, Anna appeals to 'the unmistakable eye' as her witness (ἐπιμαρτυραμένη τὸν ἀλάθητον ὀφθαλμόν), an indication of the importance she perceived eyewitnessing to hold (Michael Italikos, 107.7-9).

⁹⁵ τὰ μὲν γὰρ πλείω καὶ ἡμεῖς συνῆμεν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῇ μητρὶ συνειπόμεθα· οὐ γὰρ ἦν τὸ ἡμέτερον τοιοῦτον οἶον οἰκουρικὸν καὶ ὑπὸ σκιὰν καὶ τρυφὴν στρεφόμενον (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.4.24-26; trans. 421).

⁹⁶ That said, the young daughters of Manuel Komnenos joined their father on campaign for short periods of time. See M. Jeffreys, "Manuel Komnenos' Macedonian Military Camps: A Glamorous Alternative Court?", in J. Burke – R. Scott, *Byzantine Macedonia: Identity, Image and History* (Byzantina Australiensia 13), Melbourne, Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2000, 184-191, esp. 187-188; and J. Anderson – M. Jeffreys, "The Decoration of the Sevastokratorissa's Tent", *Byz* 64 (1994) 8-18. W. Treadgold, *Middle Byzantine Historians*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 377, suggests that Alexios 'broke with custom' by bringing his daughter along with him on campaigns. However, an expedition of Nikephoros II Phokas indicates otherwise. Cf. below, 171 n. 107.

⁹⁷ Anna Komnene, IX.5.1-3.

reached Constantinople in 1107, Alexios set off, seemingly taking only Eirene with him.⁹⁸ Anna briefly mentions caring for her father during his expedition to the Balkans in 1105, but says little of her own experiences, instead electing to praise her mother's efforts to ease Alexios' discomfort.⁹⁹ The clearest reference to Anna venturing outside the capital alongside her father is her comment on the great structures of Philippopolis, in the context of Alexios' campaign of 1114 against the Cumans: 'I myself saw traces of them when I stayed there with the emperor for some reason or other'.¹⁰⁰ The fact that Anna is rather cryptic as to when and why she visited the town instills doubt as to whether we should link the occasion with this particular campaign, though intriguingly the historian John Zonaras mentions that Eirene and the women of the court accompanied Alexios to Thrace in 1113, and stayed by his side until he progressed to Philippopolis the following spring.¹⁰¹

Even if the women in Alexios' life did join him on campaign, the likelihood of them witnessing military actions is remote. Alexios only permitted Eirene to join him in 1105 'because there was as yet no danger and the moment for battle had not arrived'.¹⁰² In the spring of 1108, Eirene was sent back to Constantinople as Alexios marched to the western Balkans to meet Bohemond.¹⁰³ In 1113, Eirene returned to Constantinople once Alexios set out to

⁹⁸ Anna Komnene, XIII.1.4-7. Eirene's actions during these campaigns were quite extraordinary – see B. Hill, "Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries", in L. James (ed.), *Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, London, Routledge, 1997, 76-99, esp. 91-92.

⁹⁹ Anna Komnene, XII.3.

¹⁰⁰ ὧν ἵχνη κατέλαβον καὶ αὐτὴ μετὰ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ἐπιδεδημηκυῖα <εἰς> τὴν πόλιν κατὰ χρεῖαν τινά (Anna Komnene, XIV.8.2.37-39; trans. 424).

¹⁰¹ John Zonaras, vol. 3, 18.26.9-10.

¹⁰² τὸ δέ τι καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀκινδύνῳ τῶν πραγμάτων ἔτι καθεστηκότων καὶ μήπω καιροῦ πολέμων ἐπιδεδημηκότος (Anna Komnene, XII.3.9.65-67; trans. 340).

¹⁰³ Anna Komnene, XIII.4.1.

relieve Nicaea.¹⁰⁴ Upon word of the imminent arrival of Turkish forces near the emperor's camp in 1116, Alexios quickly sent Eirene back to Constantinople.¹⁰⁵ Once he reached Nikomedia, Alexios sent for the empress once more, but only 'until he heard of barbarian incursions and decided to leave'.¹⁰⁶ Other sources attest that empresses (and presumably young children also) typically only accompanied the emperor on the initial stages of the journey, departing after a few days or so.¹⁰⁷ Anna's field of direct vision would thus have been limited to Constantinople. Her most notable appearances in the text – during accounts of the pending execution of Michael Anemas and the death of Alexios – occur within this space.¹⁰⁸ And though she would have been present when the First Crusade passed through the city, there are serious questions as to what a girl of fourteen years might have seen, and, moreover, recalled

¹⁰⁴ Anna Komnene, XIV.5.2.

¹⁰⁵ Anna Komnene, XV.2.1-2.

¹⁰⁶ μέχρις ἂν τὰς τῶν βαρβάρων ἐφόδους ἐνωτισθεὶς ἐκεῖθεν ἀπᾶραι βουλευθείη (Anna Komnene, XV.3.1.90-91; trans. 436).

¹⁰⁷ Attaleiates relates that the Empress Eudokia did not initially join her husband Romanos IV Diogenes as he set out on the Manzikert campaign of 1071, and instead, 'contrary to custom, remained in the City in the palace'. She did eventually join him the following day, before returning home some days later (Michael Attaleiates, 107.12-24; trans. 261-263). A different case is posed by Nikephoros II Phokas, who brought with him his wife Theophano and her three children, including, presumably, baby daughter Anna, on a campaign to Cilicia in 964. According to Skylitzes, Nikephoros left them in the fortress of Drizion (near Nigde) before entering Cilicia and engaging the enemy (John Skylitzes, 268.90-4). This episode is perhaps somewhat exceptional because Nikephoros did not return to Constantinople before the year's end, instead remaining in Cappadocia over the winter. In any case, there is nothing to suggest his family were at any time near the fighting.

¹⁰⁸ See J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene" (cit. n. 1), 264-269, and esp. 264-265: 'There is nothing to indicate that [Anna] ventured much, if at all, outside the natural settings of her life, the Komnenian family and its affinity, the court and Constantinople, during Alexios' lifetime [...]. It may therefore be inferred that her first-hand knowledge of the events of the period was largely, if not entirely, confined to those that occurred within these metropolitan milieux'.

of the affair some fifty years later.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, while Anna bills herself as an important witness to many of the events she describes, the reality was very different.¹¹⁰ The questionable assertion can in part be linked to the primacy of autopsy, though it may also be that Anna was seeking to assure the reader that she had sufficient authority and knowledge to write about her father's wars, perhaps mindful of Polybius' belief that one without experience of war could in no way write a good account of it.¹¹¹

Given that Anna did not herself witness much, and is unlikely to have collected extensive relevant material by conducting personal interviews with survivors of Alexios' reign, there can be little doubt that she made considerable use of written material, more than she would have the reader believe. Certainly, she was familiar with Psellos' *Chronographia*, and on several occasions she references the *Hyle Historias* of Nikephoros Bryennios.¹¹² The rather ambiguous term ξυγγραμμάτων may refer to various other types of material in addition to items of a military nature. Chalandon suggests that correspondence between Alexios and his subordinates may have been among Anna's written sources.¹¹³ Moreover, the *Alexiad* appears to contain a number of complete documents, including two chrysobulls, a letter Alexios sent

¹⁰⁹ Whilst relating the trouble caused by philosopher John Italos, Anna laments that she might have named his followers, 'if time had not dimmed my memory' (εἰ μὴ ὁ χρόνος με τὴν μνήμην ἀφείλετο: Anna Komnene, V.9.4; trans. 151, with amendments). Of course, memory failure in this particular instance may be a device to avoid naming particular individuals, but it remains a legitimate concern of an elderly author.

¹¹⁰ Frankopan comments that Anna's claim to have been an eyewitness 'can only apply to a handful of the episodes which appear in the text'. See P. Frankopan, "Perception and Projection" (cit. n. 61), 64.

¹¹¹ For Polybius' emphasis on the need for *empeiria* – that is, experience of events about which one writes – see K. Sacks, *Polybius* (cit. n. 21), 32-36.

¹¹² For references to Bryennios, see Anna Komnene, pr.3, I.1.3, I.4.2. For Anna's familiarity with Psellos' *Chronographia*, see S. Linnér, "Psellus' *Chronographia* and the *Alexias*. Some textual parallels", *BZ* 76 (1983) 1-9.

¹¹³ F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), XII-XIV.

to Henry IV of Germany, and the treaty of Devol agreed with Bohemond in 1108.¹¹⁴ Frankopan has questioned how Anna could have gained direct access to written material given her apparent exile, though the inclusion of these documents surely confirms our earlier notion that her ‘seclusion’ is greatly exaggerated.¹¹⁵ On the basis of Anna’s claim to have collected evidence during the reign of Manuel, both Chalandon and France have argued that any restrictions placed upon Anna were relaxed following the death of John II, enabling her to scour the archives and access texts and documents.¹¹⁶

We have already surmised that the *ζυγγραμμάτων* Anna references almost certainly included dispatches and memoirs. Though none survive, the existence of military memoirs and biographical literature concerning great aristocratic soldiers and families of the tenth and eleventh centuries has been convincingly demonstrated, with traces of such promotional material observed in extant historical works.¹¹⁷ It is reasonable to conjecture that these types

¹¹⁴ Anna Komnene, III.4.4-8 (chrysobull for Anna Dalassene); III.10.3-8 (letter to Henry IV of Germany); VI.5.10 (chrysobull for the Venetians); XIII.12 (Treaty of Devol). For further discussion, see F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), XII-XIV; G. Buckler, *Anna Komnena* (cit. n. 31), 234-239; J. Howard-Johnston, “Anna Komnene” (cit. n. 1), 278-279; and P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 14, 72-73.

¹¹⁵ P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 13 n. 31; Id., “Perception and Projection” (cit. n. 61), 73 n. 29.

¹¹⁶ F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), x-xi, XII-XIII; and J. France, “Anna Komnena” (cit. n. 57), 20.

¹¹⁷ The literature on this topic is abundant and varied, and only a sample can be cited here. For the key arguments, see J. Shepard, “Scylitzes on Armenia in the 1040s, and the Role of Catechon Cecaumenos”, *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 11 (1975-76) 269-311; Id., “Byzantium’s Last Sicilian Expedition: Scylitzes’ Testimony”, *RSBN* 24-26 (1977-79) 145-159, esp. 155-159; Id., “A Suspected Source of John Scylitzes’ *Synopsis Historion*: The Great Catechon Cecaumenos”, *BMGS* 16 (1992) 171-181; A. Markopoulos, “Zu den Biographien des Nikephoros Phokas”, *JÖB* 38 (1988) 225-233; Id., “Η ιστοριογραφία των δυνατών κατά τη μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδο. Ο Ιωάννης Κουρκούας στην ιστορική συγγραφή του πρωτοσπαθάρου και κριτή Μανουήλ”, *Parousia* 17-18 (2004-5) 397-405; Id., “From Narrative Historiography to Historical Biography. New Trends in Byzantine Historical Writing in the 10th-11th Centuries”, *BZ* 102 (2009) 703-705; J. Ljubarskij,

of texts continued to be composed under the Komnenian dynasty, and could thus be consulted by Anna during her research.¹¹⁸ We have noted a number of generals who feature prominently in the *Alexiad* and who may have ultimately informed Anna's narrative, either through orally-transmitted testimony or, more likely, written accounts. On account of George Palaiologos' prominence and favourable portrayal in historical texts, Neville postulates that Anna, along with Nikephoros Bryennios, had access to material related by Palaiologos. Neville is unsure however as to whether the tradition was written or oral, given that Anna refers to 'hearing' stories related by her uncle, which could have been Palaiologos reciting words from written memoirs.¹¹⁹ Though Anna does not mention other individuals as specific sources, it must be said that similar cases could be made for several generals who feature in the *Alexiad* based on their positive depiction and prominence.¹²⁰ However, the notion of a biographical source pertaining to George Palaiologos is substantiated by a monastic *typikon* of the Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos. While drafted almost two centuries after George's death, the *typikon* shows some knowledge of his achievements and, more significantly, indicates the existence of detailed family records. Michael passes over his ancestry, directing the reader instead to 'discourses and books composed by the learned', which provided

"Nikephoros Phokas in Byzantine Historical Writings - Trace of the Secular Biography in Byzantium", *Bsl* 54 (1993) 245-253; C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 255-297; L. Neville, "A History of the Caesar John Doukas in Nikephoros Bryennios' Material for History?", *BMGS* 32.2 (2008) 168-188; and Ead., *Heroes and Romans* (cit. n. 76), 49-59.

¹¹⁸ P. Frankopan, "Turning Latin into Greek" (cit. n. 61), 87.

¹¹⁹ L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans* (cit. n. 76), 47-49.

¹²⁰ For example, Neville has mooted the possibility that Anna utilized a lost text detailing the life of the *kaisar* John Doukas for her record of his role in the revolt that brought Alexios Komnenos to the throne. Traces of this alleged Doukas text appear to be present in the *Hyle Historias* of Nikephoros Bryennios. See L. Neville, "A History" (cit. n. 117); ead., *Heroes and Romans* (cit. n. 76), 49-58.

accounts of his forefathers' military accomplishments and pious actions.¹²¹ Though we cannot know exactly when these texts were compiled, Anna's history exhibits extensive knowledge of Palaiologos' military career, and such a body of biographical material would certainly provide this.¹²²

There are strong indications that Anna also had access to a written source covering events in Italy as well as the actions of the Norman army prior to and during Robert Guiscard's campaigns against the Byzantine Empire between 1081 and 1085. Ostensibly, Anna's remarkable awareness can be explained by her ascribing the account to an envoy of the bishop of Bari, said to have accompanied Guiscard's initial expedition.¹²³ Anna asserts that this correspondence was verbal in form (ὡς ἔλεγε), though we should by now be wary of such statements in the *Alexiad*.¹²⁴ Wilmans proposed that the individual from Bari supplied Anna with a written account, one which also formed the basis of the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* composed by contemporary

¹²¹ Παραπέμποντος, ταύτην εἴ τις ζητοίη – καὶ ὡς μετὰ τῆς κάτωθεν εὐδαιμονίας οἱ τούτου τοῦ γένους καὶ τῷ θεῷ σπουδὴν ἔθεντο πολιτεύσασθαι ὅθεν αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ κληρονόμους γενέσθαι ὑπῆρξε τῆς παρ' αὐτῷ κεκρυμμένης ζωῆς – εἰς σοφῶν λόγους καὶ βίβλους συγγραφικὰς παραπέμψομεν; αἱ γὰρ οὐ μόνον ἀξιώματα καὶ τιμὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ὡς τοῖς κρατοῦσι παρεδυνάστευον, καὶ ὡς πλούτους μεγάλους περιβέβληντο, οὐδὲ μὴν ἀγῶνας πολεμικοὺς καὶ στρατηγίας καὶ ἀριστείας ἀνάγραπτα φέρουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ θείων οἴκων καὶ σεμνείων ἱερῶν καὶ φροντιστηρίων ἐκδιδάσκουσιν ἀνεγέρσεις καὶ κτήσεων ἀφιερώσεις καὶ πενήτων προμηθείας καὶ ἀσθενούντων ἐπιμελείας καὶ παντοίων ἀπόρων προστασίας καὶ ὅσα δὴ εὐσεβῶς ἐκεῖνοι δρῶντες ἐκαρποφόρουν θεῷ (Grégoire, "Imperatoris Michaelis Palaeologi de vita sua", 449; trans. 1242).

¹²² The question of a Palaiologan source being utilized by Anna will be explored further in P. Frankopan, "Deconstructing the *Alexiad*: Identifying an Unknown Palaiologan Source in Anna Komnene's History", in I. Toth – N. Gaul (eds.), *Reading in Byzantium and Beyond: Festschrift for Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

¹²³ συνῆν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ ὁ ταῦτα μοι διηγοῦμενος Λατῖνος, ὡς ἔλεγε, πρέσβις τοῦ ἐπισκόπου Βάρεως πρὸς τὸν Ῥομπέρτον ἀποσταλὴς, καί, ὡς διεβεβαιοῦτο, σὺν τῷ Ῥομπέρτῳ <περὶ> τὴν τοιαύτην διέτριβε πεδιάδα (Anna Komnene, III.12.8.80-83).

¹²⁴ P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 73 n. 99.

Norman historian William of Apulia.¹²⁵ In light of the extensive shared content between the two works Chalandon and Ljubarskij concurred with the idea of a common lost source,¹²⁶ though others argue that Anna and William drew upon similar but ultimately different written and oral sources.¹²⁷ Most recently, Frankopan, observing the direct translation (and mistranslation) of exact phrases and sentences from the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* in the *Alexiad*, postulates that Anna did in fact consult the work of William of Apulia, though in a subsequent Greek translation rather than the original Latin rendition.¹²⁸ Inconsistencies between the two accounts – mistakes, repetition, chronological errors – are attributed not just to the intermediary source but also to Anna's use of supplementary sources as well as her editing and autho-

¹²⁵ R. Wilmans, "Über die Quellen der William der Apulia", *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 10 (1849) 93-100. Similarities between the two sources were first noted by Wilken, who determined that Anna had consulted William's account. See F. Wilken, *Rerum ab Alexio. I, Joanne, Manuele et Alexio. II Comnenis Romanorum Byzantinorum Imperatoribus Gestarum Libri Quatuor*, Heidelberg, Sumtibus Mohrri et Zimmeri, 1811, xxvi, 158. For the argument that William of Apulia drew on Greek material drafted in Constantinople for his *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, see most recently P. Brown, "The *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*: A 'Byzantine History'?", *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011) 162-179.

¹²⁶ F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), xii; F. Chalandon, *Histoire de la Domination Normande en Italie et en Sicile*, 2 vols., Paris, A. Picard et fils, 1907, vol. 1, xxxviii-xl; and J. Ljubarskij, "Ob istochnikakh 'Aleksiady' Anny Kominoi", *VV* 25 (1964) 99-120.

¹²⁷ M. Mathieu, *Guillaume de Pouille: la Geste de Robert Guiscard*, Palermo, Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici, 1961, 38-46; E. Albu, *William of Apulia's Gesta Roberti Wiscardi and Anna Comnena's Alexiad: A Literary Comparison*, PhD diss., University of California, 1975, 83-86; Id., *The Normans and their Historians: Propaganda, Myth and Distortion*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2001, 135 n. 55; and G. Loud, "Anna Komnena and her Sources for the Normans of Southern Italy", in I. Wood – G. Loud (eds.), *Church and Chronicle in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to John Taylor*, London, Hambledon Press, 1991, 41-57.

¹²⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that Anna understood Latin. Indeed, only ignorance is indicated, as seen when she confesses to having difficulty pronouncing the names of Crusader leaders and again when she later complains of having to write them (Anna Komnene, X.10.4; XIII.6.3).

rial concerns, in particular her desire to cast her father in a positive light.¹²⁹ The striking similarities between the *Alexiad* and the *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi* make Frankopan's forceful hypothesis undeniably compelling. At the very least, such is the detail and the extent of the knowledge exhibited that it is difficult to argue against the notion that Anna had access to written material for this particular section of her work.

We cannot conclude consideration of Anna's possible written sources without returning to Howard-Johnston's argument that Anna drew from a large dossier of notes and drafts compiled by her husband Nikephoros Bryennios, refining this material into a 'connected, homogeneous, high-style classicizing history'.¹³⁰ As noted, it is a suggestion which has been countered by a number of scholars. Both Neville and Stanković show that Anna did not simply copy Bryennios, but adjusted his presentation in order to fulfil her own objectives.¹³¹ Reinsch disproves Howard-Johnston's claim that the anecdotal narrative episodes in the *Alexiad*, similar to those of the *Hyle Historias*, serve as evidence of Bryennios' authorship.¹³² In particular, Howard-Johnston's theory is severely undermined by Anna frequently mentioning and praising the *Hyle Historias*, a tendency which contradicts any notion that she suppres-

¹²⁹ P. Frankopan, *The Foreign Policy* (cit. n. 12), 75-83; and Id., "Turning Latin into Greek" (cit. n. 61), where it is suggested that Anna was drawn to William's record because of its surprisingly positive treatment of her father.

¹³⁰ J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene" (cit. n. 1), 277-278. Chalandon had earlier proposed that Bryennios supplied Anna with information about the First Crusade and Alexios' expedition to Philippopolis in 1114. See F. Chalandon, *Essai* (cit. n. 28), XI-XII.

¹³¹ V. Stanković, "Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna Komnene and Konstantios Doukas. A Story about Different Perspectives", *BZ* 100 (2007) 169-175; and L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans* (cit. n. 76), 182-193.

¹³² D. R. Reinsch, "Zur literarischen Leistung des Anna Komnene", in J.O. Rosenqvist (ed.), *Leimon: Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 6), Uppsala 1996, 113-125; and Id., "Women's Literature in Byzantium? – The Case of Anna Komnene", in T. Gouma-Peterson (ed.), *Anna Komnene and her Times*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000, 83-106, esp. 97-101.

sed Bryennios' contribution to the *Alexiad*.¹³³ It is to be expected that Anna would have been influenced by her husband's work.¹³⁴ By her own admission she consulted military documents and writings, but Anna could have quite easily sourced these herself; it is unnecessary to assign Bryennios the role of intermediary in this process. The very notion of crediting the *Alexiad* to a soldier appears to stem from a prejudice that a woman could not have been responsible for such a comprehensive, informed narrative of military events.¹³⁵ This observation could be extended to any 'armchair historian'; certainly, lack of a military education and combat experience did not prevent the likes of Agathias and Leo the Deacon from writing dense narratives of campaign and battle. A recent study rightly points out that historians who witnessed military actions and fought in battle primarily drew upon their learning and reading to write about engagements rather than their own experience, and in this regard Anna had access to precisely the same influences and historiographical models as her male counterparts.¹³⁶ Anna would have been exposed to a military culture at court, and her personal fascination with warfare is evident in her focus on the 'new' marching formation her father devised during the return march from Philomelion in 1116,¹³⁷ as well as lengthy *ekphra-*

¹³³ D. R. Reinsch, "Women's Literature" (cit. n. 132), 98.

¹³⁴ Pryor observes that Anna's description of a naval battle between the Normans and the Venetians 'bears the literary imprint of Bryennios', though it does not necessarily follow that the hand of Bryennios lay behind it. See J.H. Pryor – E. Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon: The Byzantine Navy, ca.500-1204*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, 409-410 & n.14.

¹³⁵ While Charles Oman did not question the authorship of the *Alexiad*, his famous quip that Anna 'for a lady, had a very fair grasp of things military' is more than a little objectionable. See C. Oman, *A History of the Art of War* (cit. n. 80), 226 n. 1. For discussion of gender as an obstacle to acceptance of Anna in modern scholarship, and further references, see P. Frankopan, "Perception and Projection" (cit. n. 61), 61, 72 n. 12 & 13.

¹³⁶ L. Neville, *Heroes and Romans* (cit. n. 76), 183-184.

¹³⁷ Anna Komnene, XV.3-7.

seis on siege machinery and the crossbow.¹³⁸ Though Anna's military and naval terminology is somewhat problematic in its application,¹³⁹ Sullivan's comparative study of siege descriptions in the *Alexiad* alongside those found in other historical works of the Middle period shows that Anna possessed relatively impressive technical knowledge, an awareness she seemingly derived from study of military treatises. Though the siege accounts also exhibit a questionable use of terminology and confused descriptive detail, Sullivan merely sees this as further indication of Anna's authorship, with such errors not expected of a cultured soldier such as Bryennios.¹⁴⁰ With this in mind, we might respond to Howard-Johnston's hypothesis by suggesting that it was Anna's reading of older historical literature and technical handbooks, together with consultation of detailed sources, which enabled her to write convincingly about military events, despite having no direct experience of war.

Some would deprive Anna of a great literary achievement, attributing much of her research and even her work to another historian. Yet there is likewise a danger of going to other extremes in our estimation, as seen in Buckler's judgment that Anna's sources were 'almost exclusively oral', and Ljubarskij's claim that Anna wrote 'for the most part, from memory'.¹⁴¹ Like

¹³⁸ Anna Komnene, X.8.6, for the famous digression on the crossbow (*tzangra*). It should be noted that digressions on artillery were a feature of classicizing historiography. See I. Kelso, "Artillery as a Classicizing Digression", *Historia* 52.1 (2003) 122-125.

¹³⁹ For Anna's inconsistent naval terminology, see J.H. Pryor – E. Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon* (cit. n. 134), 409-410.

¹⁴⁰ D. Sullivan, "The Authorship of Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*: The Siege Descriptions Compared with the Military Instructional Manuals and other Historians", in E. Akyürek – A. Ödekan – N. Necipoğlu (eds.), *Change in the Byzantine World in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Proceedings*, İstanbul, Vehbi Koç Foundation, 2010, 51-56, esp. 56.

¹⁴¹ G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena* (cit. n. 31), 231; J. Ljubarskij, "Why is the *Alexiad* a Masterpiece" (cit. n. 60), 176; also J. France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 110-111. The view Ljubarskij expresses here contrasts somewhat with his earlier ideas about written material being at Anna's disposal. Cf. J. Ljubarskij, "Ob istochnikakh" (cit. n. 126), 118-120.

most Byzantine historians, Anna positions herself as a disciple of Thucydides in respect of her research methods, recognizing a preference for autopsy and oral testimony from eyewitnesses in order to gain confidence in her work.¹⁴² Yet such programmatic statements seem formulaic, representative of an historical ideal rather than the practical reality. Certainly, Anna's insistence that she witnessed many events first-hand whilst campaigning with her father cannot be sustained. Furthermore, her alleged conversations with veterans are difficult to accept as a key source when we consider that the majority of Alexios' leading generals and companions had died by the time Anna had begun researching her work. As such, we should give more credence to her facility to recall personal tales she heard frequently in her youth, not least those related by her father and George Palaiologos, stories which may have provided Anna with some of the more colourful episodes in her narratives of Alexios' campaigns. Such an anecdotal oral tradition would also allow for Anna being able to learn details from descendants of those who fought against and alongside Alexios.

Nevertheless, Anna's disclosure of a use of written material surely argues against any notion that she relied solely on her memory and verbal correspondence. Her statements about consulting writings of a military nature, not to mention the detail of her campaign narratives, support the consensus that she had access to a 'substantial military archive', which probably included field dispatches, campaign bulletins, diplomatic reports and official co-

¹⁴² For the preference afforded to autopsy and investigation of oral accounts stemming from eyewitnesses in the classical historiographical tradition, see G. Schepens, *L'“autopsie” dans la méthode des historiens grecs du Ve siècle avant J.-C.*, Bruxelles, Palais des Académies, 1980; and F. Hartog, *Evidence de l'histoire, ce que voient les historiens*, Paris, Editions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2005. Byzantine historians also recognized the primacy of these methods. To give one example, Leo the Deacon remarks that he will record events 'that I saw with my own eyes [...] and those that I verified from the evidence of eyewitnesses', even referencing Herodotus' famous assertion that 'eyes are more trustworthy than ears' (Leo the Deacon, 5.19-22; trans. 58; Herodotus, 1.8.2).

response.¹⁴³ Convincing hypotheses have also been made for Anna's use of military memoirs and biographies, particularly a text covering the career of George Palaiologos, as well as a translation of William of Apulia's *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, or at least a common written source. The inclusion of official documents within the *Alexiad* can leave little doubt that Anna was inclined to use written sources. While it is true that these documents, apparently quoted verbatim, represent the only written material in the *Alexiad* which is explicitly identifiable, we can be quite certain that this transparency was intentional on Anna's part, mindful that documents such as treaties were a fixture of classicizing historiography.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, it has been argued that Anna was influenced in her decision to include documents by Eusebius' *Vita Constantini*, and it may be that both Anna and Eusebius utilized official documentation in order to enhance the credibility of their work, concerned as they were that their close connection to their subject could be perceived to compromise their authorial integrity.¹⁴⁵ Imperial documents aside, Anna's seemingly extensive consultation of written material does not conform with

¹⁴³ P. Frankopan, "Introduction" (cit. n. 4), XIX; and J. Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene" (cit. n. 1), 279-280, 290.

¹⁴⁴ This practice can be traced back to Thucydides, who seemingly preserves the terms of several treaties in his history. See A. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. 3, *Books IV-V* (24), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973, 606-607, 680-682.

¹⁴⁵ For the suggestion that Anna was influenced by ecclesiastical historians such as Eusebius, see H. Lieberich, *Studien zu den Proömien in der griechischen und byzantinischen Geschichtschreibung*, vol. 2, *Die byzantinischen Geschichtschreiber und Chronisten*, München, J. G. Weiss, 1900, 20; and I. Grigoriadis, *Linguistic* (cit. n. 22), 38-39. Eusebius' use of documents is explored in A.H.M. Jones – T.C. Skeat, "Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' Life of Constantine", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5 (1954) 194-200. For the argument that Eusebius used such documents to add credence to his work, see P. Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: The Quest for the Holy Man*, California, University of California Press, 1983, 60-63.

her professed adherence to the Thucydidean mode of inquiry, again underlining the superficial nature of such indicators of continuity.¹⁴⁶

While more revealing about her material than many historians, it remains the case that Anna only names one specific written source which she utilized, the *Hyle Historias* of Nikephoros Bryennios. That she does not conceal borrowings from her husband's work can be reasonably explained by the *Alexiad* serving as a continuation, the explicit mention thus helping to legitimize Anna's endeavour and providing valid reasoning for her decision to compose a history around the reign of her father. This aside, Anna generally maintains the practice of refraining from citing oral or written sources for particular events, her father and a cluster of apparent eyewitnesses notwithstanding. It is suggested here that some of these citations were designed to lend credence to the narrative, though in other instances we may suppose that Anna deliberately omitted or concealed her informants so as not to cast doubt on the validity of her information. If historians are inconsistent in citing their sources, or indeed reluctant to specify them at all, then it is because citation was problematic, helpful and unhelpful in equal measure. For this reason historians generally preferred to inspire confidence and trust through narrative uniformity, with source identification for individual events otherwise undermining the sense of objectivity.¹⁴⁷ Anna is no different in this regard. When discussing her eyewitness informants, she insists

¹⁴⁶ Following Thucydides, the use of written records among historians of Antiquity was something of an 'exceptional occupation', or at least appeared such. See A. Momigliano, "The Place of Herodotus in the History of Historiography", in A. Momigliano (ed.), *Studies in Historiography*, London, Weidenfeld – Nicolson, 1966, 127-140, esp. 135. In light of this, Byzantine historians and chroniclers continued to be reticent to disclose a reliance on written material, though there can be little question that they made extensive use of it. The issue is discussed at length in K. Sinclair, *War Writing* (cit. n. 14), 26-34, 190-207.

¹⁴⁷ The point is made in relation to Thucydides and historians of Antiquity by J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition* (cit. n. 20), 9; and S. Goldhill, *The Invention of Prose*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 43.

that ‘there was no discrepancy in their accounts’.¹⁴⁸ Yet the validity of this statement is suspect, not least since Anna admits to encountering contrasting evidence in her research.¹⁴⁹ It is realistic to assume that Anna received conflicting accounts for many events, and her bold claim to the contrary is presumably an attempt to outwardly follow Thucydides and convince readers of the veracity of her content through a homogeneous narrative. The choice may have endeared the *Alexiad* to her contemporaries, but it ensures that our efforts to identify her sources for specific episodes must remain a matter of speculation.

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P. Gautier, “Le *Typikon* du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator”, *REB* 32 (1974) 1-145.

¹⁴⁸ ἄλλων ἄλλό τι διηγουμένων καὶ μεμνημένων ὧν ἕκαστος ἔτυχε καὶ πάντων ὁμοφωνούντων (Anna Komnene, XIV.7.4.20-24; trans. 420-421).

¹⁴⁹ Accounting for the Empress Maria’s continued presence in the palace after the abdication of her husband Nikephoros III Botaneiates, Anna opines: ‘I have heard many others speak of these things with differing accounts, as some interpreted the events of that time in one way, and others in another; each followed their own inclination, influenced by sympathy or hatred, and I saw that they did not all share the same opinion’ (καὶ πολλῶν μὲν καὶ ἄλλων περὶ τούτων λεγόντων ἀκήκοα καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους διαφερομένων, τῶν μὲν οὕτως, τῶν δὲ οὕτως ἐκλαμβανομένων τὰ τότε πραχθέντα, ἐκάστου πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν τῆς ψυχῆς κατάστασιν καὶ ὡς πρὸς αὐτὴν εὐνοίας ἢ μίσους εἶχε, καὶ οὐ πάντα τῆς αὐτῆς ἑώρων γνώμης: Anna Komnene, III.1.4.42-53; trans. 80). It should also be noted that Anna offers two reports of how the monk Raiktor claimed to be the deposed emperor Michael VII Doukas, deeming one version of events to be more convincing than the other (Anna Komnene, I.12.6-11).

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